

CAREER SPOTLIGHT



Health Therapists & Technicians

Are you looking for a career with great long-term potential? With the increased demand for healthcare, opportunities for professionals in these occupations have never been better. According to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, this industry is expected to grow 30 percent and add more than 4.3 million jobs nationally between 2004 and 2014.

You have heard of physicians and nurses, but may be less familiar with other healthcare occupations such as respiratory therapists, occupational therapists, nuclear medicine technologists, radiation therapists, diagnostic medical sonographers, radiologic technicians, and many others.

These lesser-known jobs often pay well, have many positions available, and don't require many years of training. Let's look at just one of these occupations.


Respiratory therapist has been selected by the Utah Department of Workforce Services as a "five-star" occupation because it offers high wages and has many job openings. Respiratory therapists evaluate, treat and care for patients of all ages with heart and lung problems, from babies with underdeveloped lungs to adults with chronic disease.

They administer aerosol medications and oxygen, conduct diagnostic tests, monitor ventilator settings, and perform chest physiotherapy to remove mucus from patients' lungs and make it easier

for them to breathe. Because therapists operate advanced medical equipment, it helps to be good with computers and pay attention to detail. Respiratory therapists work with physicians to develop a plan of care, and may also supervise respiratory therapy technicians. Most respiratory therapists work in a hospital setting, where they may be required to work evenings, weekends or night shifts. An increasing number also work in nursing homes, extended care facilities, and home care, where they travel to patients' homes to provide treatment.

To become a respiratory therapist, you must attend an associate degree program and obtain a license to practice in Utah. For example, Weber State University offers both an associate and bachelor's degree in respiratory therapy. The University reports that

100 percent of their graduates find jobs in the field. Respiratory therapy students take coursework in subjects such as physiology, microbiology, and chemistry, and spend time at the hospital learning on the job. If you enjoy helping people, are good at math and science, like variety, and are looking for a career with multiple advancement opportunities, this profession could be a great fit.

Respiratory therapists enjoy above-average pay, and currently earn a median wage of about \$24.00 an hour. Demand for respiratory therapists continues to grow at a high rate, particularly as an aging population experiences more pneumonia, pulmonary disease, and other respiratory problems. In Utah, this occupation is expected to have about 60 openings per year. 

Are you interested in learning more about respiratory therapy or other great careers in healthcare? Visit our website at www.jobs.utah.gov/opencms/wi or the American Association for Respiratory Care at http://www.aarc.org/career/be_an_rt to learn more.

Selected Health Occupations and Wages



Source: Utah Department of Workforce Services